



# NEEDED: Global Villagers

*Must understand global interdependence, global economics, global problems, and global conflicts. Must be multilingual.*

**Yong Zhao**

**A**s I write these words, the world is battling an unprecedented economic crisis and the potentially deadly H1N1 virus. Both battles serve as a jolting reminder that the human race has entered a new era in which geographical and political boundaries no longer serve to isolate its


six billion members scattered around the globe.

The globe has shrunk into an interconnected and interdependent village through global movements of goods, information, money, and people. But this village is new, its residents have just moved in, and they don't know one another very well. They come from different tribes, speak different languages, and have customs that may

appear strange to those outside their group. They may be suspicious of one another.

For their sake and the sake of the whole village, they have to learn to live together peacefully and productively. As institutions charged with the responsibility for preparing future citizens, schools must educate students to become competent citizens of the global village.





them.” He adds another essential element: “the attitudinal and ethical dispositions that make it possible to interact peacefully, respectfully, and productively with fellow human beings from diverse geographies” (Reimers, in press).

Consistent across most definitions of global competence is the issue of getting

neighbors—because these behaviors promote peace.

One element, then, of global citizenship is knowledge of the vast economic and social inequalities existing in today’s world as well as the repercussions of these inequalities. Although globalization may have generated more wealth around the world, the distribution has

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along with people. In our effort to educate global citizens, we must develop a framework for dealing with others. This framework has five crucial requirements.

### ***Understanding Global Interdependence***

A basic truth about living in the global village is that the welfare of all human beings has become so interconnected and interdependent that no individual, organization, or nation can continue to live prosperously when their fellow villagers live in misery. Poverty, diseases such as HIV/AIDS, conflicts, and resource shortages in one part of the world can affect other countries, no matter how far away they are. Conflicts in the Middle East can cause gas prices everywhere to rise. Famine in Africa can increase food prices globally. Water shortages in Ethiopia can lead to wars in the region, resulting in great numbers of refugees and illegal migration to other nations. Even from a purely selfish perspective, we in wealthier communities must learn to help others and work on raising the living standards of our impoverished

neighbors. Some have even charged that it has increased misery worldwide (Bigelow & Peterson, 2002). Our children, who will live in this village much longer than we will, need to understand that globalization’s negative outcomes—exploitation of poor countries, for example—can affect their own lives.

### ***Understanding Global Economics***

On March 12, 2009, the Michigan House of Representatives passed a package of bills called The Hire Michigan First plan with an 82–26 vote. These bills, if passed in their entirety in the Senate, would reward businesses that hire Michigan workers with state tax breaks and other economic incentives and would require businesses to report whom they hire to ensure that Michigan residents are given priority. Michigan is not alone. Since the beginning of the current financial crisis, many countries have begun to take measures to protect jobs for their own citizens (Gamberoni & Newfarmer, 2009).

As a longtime tax-paying Michigan resident who has witnessed years of continued, massive job losses in the

### **A Framework for Global Competence**

Fernando Reimers, director of Global Education at Harvard Graduate School of Education, defines global competency as “the knowledge and skills that help people understand the flat world in which they live, the skills to integrate across disciplinary domains to comprehend global affairs and events, and the intellect to create possibilities to address

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## *The cruelties and obstacles of this swiftly changing planet w*

state, I am sympathetic with the intention of these plans. However, in times of global economic crises, such protectionist measures may not solve the problem. Instead, they may lead to deeper recession and result in higher unemployment around the globe, just like what happened in the economic crisis in the 1930s.

Pascal Lamy, director-general of the World Trade Organization, has pointed out that the protectionist measures that

country than another. New technologies can completely wipe out previous industries. How many buggy whip manufacturers can you find in the U.S. today?

Even without globalization, what powers a nation's economy can change and force people to transition to other types of jobs. According to a study by McKinsey (Baily & Lawrence, 2005) that was based on an analysis of detailed trade and industry data,

Such an understanding will not only help all citizens actively participate in and contribute to the global society, but also reduce negative feelings toward other countries and enhance harmony in the global village.

### **Understanding Global Problems**

Global warming has already caused the Arctic ice sheet to shrink, glaciers to retreat, and sea levels to rise. We have seen changes in the amount and patterns of precipitation, resulting in flooding and drought. Global warming also causes extreme weather conditions, affects agricultural yields, leads to the extinction of species, and increases the spread of life-threatening diseases. One study (CNA Corporation, 2007) noted the sobering political implications as well:

Projected climate change will seriously exacerbate already marginal living standards in many Asian, African, and Middle Eastern nations, causing widespread political instability and the likelihood of failed states. . . . The chaos that results can be an incubator of civil strife, genocide, and the growth of terrorism. (p. 6)

But climate change is not the only serious problem facing all human beings. Environmental degradation, deforestation, desertification, oil depletion, and destruction of wildlife habitats are all consequences of globalization. The economic growth resulting from globalization has significantly increased consumption of natural resources and caused irreversible damage to our environment.

When China imports timber from Indonesia, it exports deforestation. When Brazilians replace forests in the Amazon region with coffee fields, they affect global temperatures. When the United States sends its manufacturing industries overseas, it sends pollution there, too.

Global problems can only be solved globally. One country can change its energy policy, impose greenhouse gas

countries took in the 1930s eventually led to the Great Depression (Melik, 2009). The Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act, which raised tariffs on imported goods to protect U.S. workers, sent the global economy into deeper recession. The unemployment rate in the United States jumped from 7.8 percent in 1929 to 25.1 percent in 1933.

Although economists around the world are warning political leaders not to repeat this mistake, leaders feel tremendous domestic pressure to consider actions that protect the interests of their constituents in the short term, despite the eventual damages these actions may have in the long term.

One commonly held view, namely that developing countries and foreigners are robbing jobs from the developed nations, is not necessarily accurate. First, industries change and jobs get lost. As Robert Thompson (2006), chair of the International Food and Agricultural Trade Council, explained,

countries' competitive positions change all the time. No economy stands still. New mineral deposits are found, and others are depleted. Some countries' populations grow, and others decline. Research may find new technologies that provide a greater advantage to one

trade, particularly rising imports of goods and services, didn't destroy the vast majority of the jobs lost in the United States since 2000. . . . Only about 314,000 jobs (11 percent of the manufacturing jobs lost) were lost as a result of trade. . . . Falling exports, not rising imports, were responsible. Service sector offshoring destroyed even fewer jobs. These figures are tiny relative to the millions of positions lost and created every year in the United States by normal market forces. . . . Manufacturing's share of total U.S. employment has been falling for at least half a century—a trend that is typical, not only of developed economies, but also of many developing ones.

The study suggests that a common perception in the United States—that China and India have caused massive job losses in our manufacturing and service sectors—is just not the case. In fact, one study found that trade and investment with China will likely result in a 0.7 percent increase in U.S. gross domestic product (GDP) and a 0.8 percent decrease in prices by 2010 as well as an increase of 0.7 percent in output per worker across the U.S. economy (Britton & Mark, 2006).

It is crucial for citizens of the global village to develop a good understanding of economics from a global perspective.

## **Our children need to understand that globalization's negative outcomes can affect their own lives.**



*not yield to obsolete dogmas and outworn slogans.* —Robert F. Kennedy

taxes, or promote conservation, but unless all countries adopt similar approaches, it is impossible to address these problems effectively. However, this raises a moral difficulty. Because all countries have the right to pursue a better, more modern lifestyle for their people, how can we tell developing nations *not* to pursue economic development, even when it leads to pollution and environmental destruction?

Is it desirable—or even possible—for everyone on earth to maintain an American lifestyle? Part of the solution to the problem implied in this question—that if such a lifestyle spread, it would unduly tax the planet—lies in scientific and technological innovations that deliver a higher standard of living while consuming fewer natural resources. For example, energy-efficient automobiles might enable more people to drive while consuming the same or a lesser amount of gas. Changes in human behavior are also required. Turning off the water while brushing your teeth is as important in saving water as developing more efficient irrigation technologies. Recycling, switching off lights, and simply consuming less can significantly reduce humans' impact on earth.

All of these issues require people to understand the nature of global problems: their causes; potential effects; complex moral, economic, and political implications; and possible solutions. Knowledge of global problems is an essential component of what makes a contributing citizen in the global village.

### **Understanding Human Conflicts**

Wars are perhaps the most costly, self-destructive human enterprise in the world. Killing others and destroying others' properties are often justified through demonizing others, through drawing a distinct line between "us" and "them."

It is a natural human tendency to do this, although the "us" and "them"

merely serve as continually evolving containers. Human beings make the separation in many ways: by race, gender, belief, skin color, birthplace, language, interest, political entity, or any other distinguishable features human beings may bear. Those who look like ourselves are "us"; so are those who believe in the same God, share the same country, or have the same level of



income. "We" are always better than "them," and "we" should always be wary of "them" because "they" always want to destroy "us." For all sorts of psychological, technological, political, and cultural reasons, most of "us" do not have direct experiences with "them" or have much knowledge about "them" and their real intentions. The lack of knowledge and understanding feeds the powerful feeling of fear, which has been used to start wars and war-associated activities, such as building up a threatening military arsenal.

Globalization has the potential to both increase the likelihood and scale of conflicts and reduce the possibility of such conflicts. On the one hand, globalization intensifies competition for resources. It engenders a sense of being invaded by other countries through incoming goods and migrants, and it results in dissatisfaction because of

increased income disparities, exploitation, and destruction of local resources and cultural traditions (Galtung, 2003; Stiglitz, 2006). Advances in information and communication technologies further heighten the sense of injustice and exploitation because people around the globe are more aware of the huge differences in living standards between rich and poor. Advanced technologies have also made conflicts more violent and destructive than ever before.

On the other hand, global economic integration binds people together and makes their interests more inter-dependent. People are more unlikely to go to war because they realize it damages both parties (Friedman, 1999).

Migration, tourism, and information and communication technologies all provide more opportunities for people to interact with and learn about one another.

We need citizens who can use globalization to reduce distrust and fear among different people. This requires a new mind-set that considers *all* human beings as "us," helping us transcend traditional racial, religious, political, and other boundaries.

### **Understanding Other Cultures**

Cross-cultural competency involves a deep understanding and appreciation of different cultures. Anthropologists Daniel Bates and Fred Plog (1990) define culture as "the system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that the members of society use to cope with their world and with one another, and that are transmitted from generation to generation through learning" (p. 7). This definition encompasses more than just factual knowledge about a culture. It also points out that culture is learned and transmitted from generation to generation, which makes it fairly stable and ubiquitous—and largely unconscious. To develop real understanding of another culture

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**AUDIO** Visit the ASCD Web site for an interview with Yong Zhao at [www.ascd.org/authortalks/#zhao](http://www.ascd.org/authortalks/#zhao).



requires us to experience that culture in context, rather than simply memorizing facts or imitating stereotypes.

Cross-cultural competency also means being able to live in different cultures and move across different societies fluently. In the globalized world, it is impossible to be competent in all world cultures, but it is essential to be open to new and different cultures. Proficiency in foreign languages is essential. Today, many education systems teach foreign languages for

courses, which typically have more of a linguistic focus. Language arts courses should familiarize students with literary works, film productions, and art from countries that have not traditionally been part of the curriculum. Science courses should address such urgent issues as global climate change and infectious disease (see “The Science Students Need to Know,” on p. 28 of this issue). Social studies should include content about economic globalization and its social and moral consequences

with and dependent on others. They must understand and be willing to tackle common problems facing the village. They must treat one another as equals. They must try to understand and appreciate one another's beliefs, values, behaviors, and customs. Finally, they must be able to talk to one another, using a common language.

This is not an easy task because schools have historically been local entities. They are locally funded, and they typically consider their students as citizens of their local communities, be those communities cities or nations, whose purposes they are asked to serve.

In this view, globalization becomes a force that brings competition to the local community. Thus, schools tend to work on ensuring that their students can compete with their foreign counterparts. So they pay much attention to how they stack up against other schools, particularly those in other nations, in the traditional subjects, such as math, science, and literacy. Moreover, the local view leads schools to reinforce the local mind-set, which asks students to judge events on the basis of their effect on the local communities or on themselves.

The task is not easy, but the stakes are high. The survival of the human race hinges on the degree to which we can learn to live together harmoniously in this tiny village where resources are limited and unequally distributed. We have invented enough tools to wipe ourselves off the surface of the earth many times over. We have also caused enough damage to this planet we call home that unless we take immediate collaborative action, we may soon be rendered homeless. **EL**

<sup>1</sup>The Asia Society provides guidelines for educators wishing to promote global competence in their students. Readers can find a number of helpful publications on this topic at <http://internationaled.org>.

## References

Baily, M. N., & Lawrence, R. Z. (2005, February). Don't blame trade for U.S. job losses: A new look at U.S. trade and

## In the globalized world, it is essential to be open to new and different cultures.

economic reasons, thus focusing only on competency in communication. Although this is important, language also serves as an insightful window into the “shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts” of a society. Foreign language teaching can shoulder the responsibility for helping students understand cultures.

### What Global Education Looks Like

To help students develop these understandings, schools and teachers must shift from a locally oriented curriculum to a globally oriented one. Foreign languages should be part of the curriculum for every student, and schools need to offer languages early, preferably starting in the primary grades. The content of those courses should be more culturally targeted than most of today's foreign language

as well as the causes and dangers of human conflicts.

A globally oriented education should not stop at imparting knowledge. It should include significant experiences with “others.” Coursework should provide students with opportunities to interact with people around the globe to emphasize our interconnectedness. Schools could develop partnerships with schools in other countries to enable students to collaborate on global issues. Programs such as international study tours, student and teacher exchanges, and global cultural events are also excellent ways to help students develop global competencies.<sup>1</sup>

### Citizens Without Borders

For the global village to be a happy and prosperous place for all its residents, all people must accept the fact that their well-being is intricately interconnected

### EL online

To learn more about how globalization is changing education, see the online-only September *EL* article “Leading for Global Competency” by Fernando M. Reimers at [www.ascd.org/publications/educational\\_leadership/sept09/vol67/num01/Leading\\_for\\_Global\\_Competency.aspx](http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational_leadership/sept09/vol67/num01/Leading_for_Global_Competency.aspx)

